

1 WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for intermittently downloading television program data to a plurality of user terminals equipped with a data receiver, a memory for storing television program data, an on-screen electronic program guide generator, a microprocessor, and a television monitor for displaying television programs and an electronic program guide, the method comprising the steps of:

normally powering the data receivers off;
intermittently transmitting television program data to the user terminals;
powering the data receivers on to intercept the transmitted program data;
storing the transmitted program data in the memory;
programming the microprocessor to transfer television program data from the memory to the generator in response to user commands;
programming the microprocessor to control the generator to generate a video drive signal representative of an on-screen television program guide; and
coupling the generator to the monitor to display the on-screen program guide.

2. The method of claim 1, in which the data receiver comprises a television tuner and VBI decoder and the transmitting step comprises embedding the program data in a television signal received by the tuner.

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